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MANUALS OF THE INNER LIFE

The Religion of the Collects

Brief Meditations

by

J. B. LANCELOT

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FOREWORD

IN the faith that the Prayer Book Collects are not only a rich treasury of devotion but a casket containing much pure and suggestive wisdom, these little meditations contributed to the pages of *The Liverpool Review* are now printed in book form with the editor's kind consent and goodwill.

ST. JAMES'S VICARAGE,
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FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

ALMIGHTY God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which Thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when He shall come again in His glorious Majesty to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal, through Him who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever. Amen.

Renunciation first, riddance from about us and within of all that is base, for so in most of us any good life begins, and "Gentlemen, the time of life is short: to spend that shortness basely were too long." Then a new harnessing, the armour of light, Christ Himself. As God's primal work light is kindly, and He who is the true light came as at this time to shed it abroad. Yet there is a darkness that men love, for it covers up their misdeeds. Light, on the other hand, shields the innocent and aids the good soldier. There is in it too a judging power, as there was in Him, even in the days of His great humility: how much more when judgment is His purpose? For the shining of that Advent the only true preparation is, "Love the light: walk honestly as in the day: live as sure of its coming." Is it not always wholesome doctrine? Dare we ever omit the note of judgment from the Christian message?

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

BLESSED Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning; Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience, and comfort of Thy holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life which Thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

"In such wise," as aware that the holy Scriptures contain a Divine message, and that we can only think aright about God when we are loyal to their teaching. Then we shall learn everywhere on their pages what is, after all, their main lesson—namely, to know Him, and ourselves in His light. Would that men were so reading them, not (as Bacon says) to find talk, to contradict and confute, or even to believe and take for granted, but to weigh and consider! They would be happier and braver if only because from beginning to end the Bible is one long call to hope. As we advance in years the climax of Scripture seems just this—that life everlasting is offered to us through the Gospel. It is bound up with God's love, yet as a hope it shines and glows only in the radiance of Him who died and rose again. But it needs to be embraced and held fast, for, as someone wrote of himself the other day: "My certainty of hope in the life to come gets paralysed if I do not pray regularly." Here, then, is one avenue for patience.

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

O Lord Jesu Christ, who at Thy first coming didst send Thy messenger to prepare Thy way before Thee; Grant that the ministers and stewards of Thy mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready Thy way, by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that at Thy second coming to judge the world we may be found an acceptable people in Thy sight, who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

The making of roads is a great piece of civilisation. Where they do not exist and a king is coming, the rough places must be made plain, and what a task it is! The Romans, we know, did it thoroughly well. It meant for them the reign of law and the blessings of intercourse. So in a higher sphere the process has its place and meaning. The Baptist prepared the way of the Lord by preaching repentance: his successors, all greater in privilege than he, yet ministers and stewards and therefore under authority, are entrusted with a like message and work towards a like result—the reign of that wisdom which comes from obedience to Christ the King, and the blessings of a fellowship based upon His sovereignty. But to turn men's hearts is harder often than to clear away rubbish or remove an awkward corner or ease a gradient. Prejudice, misunderstanding, ignorance, as well as wilful disobedience—what obstacles they are in the King's road, and what prayers should ascend for His workmen! Intercession may be a great mystery, but it is at least true that you can never pray for a man without wanting to understand him and to help him.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

O LORD, raise up (we pray Thee) Thy power, and come among us, and with great might succour us; that whereas, through our sins and wickedness, we are sore let and hindered in running the race that is set before us, Thy bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us; through the satisfaction of Thy Son our Lord, to whom with Thee and the Holy Ghost be honour and glory, world without end. Amen.

Runners "sore let and hindered" yet eager to push on: a Helper amply able, if He would, to remove their entanglements: a cry to His power for speedy deliverance—in each clause there is something to make us pause and think. Are we so eager? Can He be thought of reluctant, as holding His strength in abeyance, and leaving us to struggle along as best we may? Must help always be speedy? No, it comes rather at His time, for His purposes do not always "ripen fast," but leave room for our patience and enduring co-operation. Anyhow, it is never His unwillingness that is at fault, but our unreadiness to lay hold of His power, and that because our pace is so slow that we have little sense of hindrance and of need. The supreme call is for eagerness in running. It means self-discipline, and an eye fixed upon the goal. But where these are, can we doubt that our Helper's strength is at our disposal, both sufficient in measure and apposite in time?

CHRISTMAS DAY

ALMIGHTY God, who hast given us Thy only-begotten Son to take our nature upon Him, and as at this time to be born of a pure Virgin; Grant that we being regenerate, and made Thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by Thy holy Spirit; through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the same Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Adoption and grace, all, that is to say, that the Incarnate Lord has won for us—yes, we thankfully receive these His inestimable benefits. Sons we all are by creation, but the temper of sonship is ours only in and through Him. And even so we need renewal, just as our race did before His birth. Accordingly, when baptism into His name has done for us individually what redemption did for the world generally, then comes our prayer for daily increase in His holy Spirit, more and more. "Christ liveth in me," exclaims the veteran St. Paul. "Be born in us today," cries Phillips Brooks. We hesitate, most of us, to use the language of either, certainly the Apostle's, but we *wish* that we could make it our own. Inward renewal is, anyhow, for many the one thing supremely and continually needed, though for others conversion, a strong and solemn turning of the will, may be even more urgent: but fresh supplies of faith and hope, a daily increase of vigour and inward health and joy, who would not pray for these?

THE CIRCUMCISION OF CHRIST

ALMIGHTY God, who madest Thy blessed So to be circumcised, and obedient to the law fo man; Grant us the true circumcision of the Spirit that, our hearts, and all our members, bein mortified from all worldly and carnal lusts, w may in all things obey Thy blessed will; through the same Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord Amen.

"Born of woman, born under law," heir to the obligations of His race, liable to that pain which for our sin (as Milton says) "thus soon begins His infancy to seize." "But oh, ere long Huge pangs and strong Will pierce more near His heart." We have our own: men have even imposed such on themselves, and the acceptance of them is a virtue so far as it makes obedience easier and more fruitful. Thus to "endure hardness" is an ingredient in all high Christian service: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself." In particular, he needs to have his body so freed from the dominion of its own cravings as to be open to the dictates of the "circumcised" spirit, themselves a response to that Higher Will which seeks our true happiness. But "in all things"—how bracing a task! A New Year may be bright with promise, but the happiness we seek cannot come all from without: "renew a right spirit within me" may be today our most needful prayer.

THE EPIPHANY

O God, who by the leading of a star didst manifest Thy only-begotten Son to the Gentiles: Mercifully grant, that we, which know Thee now by faith, may after this life have the fruition of Thy glorious Godhead; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The leading of a star, something that came to them in their studies: so, today, astronomy may teach us many great and humbling lessons about the glory of God and the littleness of man —young people may do worse than take it up. But it is not for Christian men the usual avenue to spiritual knowledge. "Send out Thy light and Thy truth, let them lead me." And suppose a man says, "I will read my verses, I will make my Communion regularly, I will seek to do the will," does he walk in the darkness? Is he not led, oftentimes in ways of pleasantness and in paths of peace, sometimes "o'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent," yet still led? Let us be sure that we all have some "star" now—some duty that insists, some hope that beckons, some one conviction to which we hold on, though all else seem to fail, as, for instance, that the story of the Gospel is unique, that He who is revealed there is trustworthy, that His ideals are best, and let us believe that if we only follow where it leads it will take us even here, and increasingly hereafter, unto God's holy hill.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

O LORD, we beseech Thee mercifully to receive the prayers of Thy people which call upon Thee; and grant that they may both perceive and know what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

"What are you going to be? Is there any good reason why you should not take Holy Orders?" What a man urges against it would, often enough, were it only valid, prove him to be no serious Christian at all. For there *are* duties which fall to the humblest disciple, and "What wilt Thou have me to do?" is a prayer that each one of us might make, as well as Saul of Tarsus. To do—and not merely to think, to believe, to admire: the State, dependent as it is so largely for its welfare on the industry of the people, might well be grateful to the Church for laying such stress upon it. True, for most men work is a necessity, and where it is congenial may be even a joy, while the upward look can sanctify *any* task and "make drudgery divine": yet something for Christian "ought-ness" over and above the daily round, some definite little service to God and His Church—find that and do it. The strength will come.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, who dost govern all things in heaven and earth; Mercifully hear the supplications of Thy people, and grant us Thy peace all the days of our life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

To assert the government of God is a great act of faith. There is so much that seems to contradict it. Evil is strong, suffering is all around us, accidents happen. But if things were not so, would the world be as good a world as it is for making men and women? Take pain away, and would it be a nice world to live in, human nature remaining what it is? The Divine omnipotence does not mean a tyrant's power, but a goodness that can patiently work towards an end which, while it is sure to come, yet respects our freedom and so ministers to our growth—a higher conception of God, surely, than that of a Being who coddles His creatures but does not train them. God may love us with a masculine love, as the Stoic said, but love us He does, and things work together for final good towards us, provided only we seek to ally ourselves with His purpose. Then, "blessed are the single-hearted, for they shall enjoy much peace."

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, mercifully look upon our infirmities, and in all our dangers and necessities stretch forth Thy right hand to help and defend us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Heaven help us! It is a somewhat irreverent form of speech, implying that our case is hopeless. But is this the doctrine of the Bible, or the experience of the humble? Help from above may not always come in the way we hope or expect, but it is unbelief to deny it altogether. "Infirmities," "necessities": we think of a boy struggling for life in the grip of some fell disease, his parents, Christian folk, looking on day by day, apparently helpless. But there is one thing that they can do—namely, appeal to the "right hand" of power and healing. Often there follows from the lips of the Christian doctor such a confession as that attributed to the great French surgeon, Ambroise Paré, "I treated him and God cured him." The truth is that there is mystery both in the healing virtue of medicine and in the answer to prayer. We use both. It is the same with food, a prime necessity. We plough and sow in order to get it, for it would not come otherwise. But we also pray, "Give us this day our daily bread."

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

O God, who knowest us to be set in the midst of so many and great dangers, that by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot always stand upright; Grant to us such strength and protection, as may support us in all dangers, and carry us through all temptations; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

"Without Me ye can do nothing": so spake He who knew what was in man. Is the language too strong? Some today would say so. To us self-reliance is a virtue. Fortune, we believe, favours the brave. He can conquer, says Emerson, who believes he can. And man *is* conquering air, distance, disease, and much besides, resourcefulness and pluck never going without a reward of some sort. So, in the moral sphere, though merciful men will plead human frailty in defence of an erring brother, they have little patience with one who thereby seeks to excuse himself. Yet the case of the soul is often perilous: who does not feel it in the face of subtle temptation and clinging desire? We make our young people say "I do" in a pledge of noble endeavour given at a critical moment of their lives; but our prayer for them immediately is that the Fatherly Hand may ever be over them for protection and the Holy Spirit ever be with them for vigour of inward life; and in our advice to them we do not follow Emerson, but say in faith and hope, "He can conquer who believes in God."

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

O Lord, we beseech Thee to keep Thy Church and household continually in Thy true religion; that they who do lean only upon the hope of Thy heavenly grace may evermore be defended by Thy mighty power; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

"Thy true religion." Yes, *religion* some would urge and not theology, not orthodoxy but life. We will not quarrel with them unduly provided they do not really mean to slight the claims of truth, but are ready to pray with us for a fuller knowledge of it. For truth does matter. We may only grasp a little and realise imperfectly all that little implies. But ultimately we are driven to ask, Is it true, this idea of God, this interpretation of life? Is this expression of belief and worship in line with the highest that has been revealed? It may be, yet even so it needs faith and prayer if it is to be held aright, for it is "touched with infinity." To gain more truth we must obey what we have. Holding tenaciously that which we see, we must yet be considerate towards those who see parts other than our own: are not they also members of the household? But truth is still there, though in mind and conduct we choose to ignore it.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

O God, whose blessed Son was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil, and make us the sons of God, and heirs of eternal life; Grant us, we beseech Thee, that, having this hope, we may purify ourselves, even as He is pure; that, when He shall appear again with power and great glory, we may be made like unto Him in His eternal and glorious kingdom; where with Thee, O Father, and Thee, O Holy Ghost, He liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

It is a great Collect this, looking back towards Advent, yet with Lent and the obligation of self-training in the immediate foreground. First, the manifestation of the Stronger, come to bind, to destroy, to release; then the same Prince in glory, the kingdom, the transformation of sin-stained men into His very likeness. Meantime, for today and tomorrow, the duty and the purifying power of hope. It is fixed on Him, and He is pure beyond compare, and the cleansing virtue of His beauty higher far than the legendary chief's of whom it is written that his knights stood round him and listened to his words, and

> I beheld
> From eye to eye thro' all their Order flash
> A momentary likeness of the king.

That shall be our own, only deeper and more perfect when we too "see Him as He is." But we can only see what we have trained ourselves to see. Begin then now, for *some* likeness is the condition of vision, a desire at least, a wistful yearning, and face resolutely turned His way. And the end? What that may be we leave to the contemplation of devout and humble souls.

THE SUNDAY CALLED SEPTUAGESIMA

O LORD, we beseech Thee favourably to hear the prayers of Thy people; that we who are justly punished for our offences may be mercifully delivered by Thy goodness, for the glory of Thy Name; through Jesus Christ our Saviour, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. **Amen.**

Punishment is not a pleasant word: put "eternal" in front of it and what a problem emerges! But the statement "justly punished for our offences," and that here and now, is both true and formidable. Our sins usually find us out. They have consequences which are often irreparable. "Myself am hell"; that is the worst penalty of all. It is when we realise this that forgiveness becomes a great and difficult article of faith, so difficult that of it we have all probably had need to say at some time or other, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." But it is the message of the Gospel, and though a body damaged by vice must usually go on as it is, yet there can be no limit set to the work of Christ on human souls; they can be delivered, restored, renewed. Whatever else may claim consideration when the ethics of punishment are under review, Christian men will always set the reformation of the offender in the foreground. Is there not the everlasting mercy for him who repents? Is not this the crowning glory of Christ's Name that He receiveth sinners?

THE SUNDAY CALLED SEXAGESIMA

O LORD God, who seest that we put not our trust in anything that we do: mercifully grant that by Thy power we may be defended against all adversity; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

"I am all right: I have never done anybody any harm." It is more than any one of us has the right to say, and were it true would still be a miserable defence. "No harm!" a meagre harvest when "much fruit" is looked for to glorify the heavenly Husbandman. But in the plea there is an element of pride which is completely alien to the spirit of the Bible. There the cry of the best always is, "O put thy trust in God," and the first blessing of the Gospel is for "the poor in spirit." But the real trust of too many today is not in their harmlessness, or in their activities, but in their possessions, and false values are the true peril of their souls. Their positions are secure, their investments are gilt-edged, and serious adversity seems impossible. The task of the Christian advocate is first to create in them a sense of inward poverty, and then to show them visions of usefulness. Yet be their service what it may—and some is imperative—for them, as for us all, it is "Mercy from first to last."

THE SUNDAY CALLED QUINQUAGESIMA

O Lord, who hast taught us that all our doings without charity are nothing worth: Send Thy Holy Ghost and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace and of all virtues, without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before Thee: Grant this for Thine only Son Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

"What are you worth?" A proper question, maybe, from a banker to the applicant for an overdraft. The answer comes—so many thousands of gold and silver. Yet for how little will they count towards what is good if a miser's hand control them! So of any act or course it may be said that it represents so much pretence, policy, ambition, and little or nothing besides. In a man real worth means richness and clarity of mind, honesty of conviction, generosity of character; and true nobility of doing has love for its supreme motive. Into obedience to this law we are here to be trained, for the most searching test of education is what you have come to care for: and to care for the best and highest just because it is that, and to care for it so much that for it a man is ready, like Bassanio, to "give and hazard all he hath," this is "that most excellent gift of charity," the inner life and spring of all moral excellences, uniting and presenting them in that highest type of worth yet found in the world—the Christian gentleman. May his tribe increase!

ASH WEDNESDAY

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, who hatest nothing that Thou hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all them that are penitent; Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we worthily lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of Thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

"It is He that hath made us." The Psalmist's appeal is for recognition and gratitude on our part, that of the collect for mercy on His. Yet there is a Gospel in Creation itself. Has God made man for nought, to hate and not to save? It cannot be. But He who has made can also re-make, in response to penitence and prayer. The question is, Are these ever worthy of that Holiness to which they are offered, or adequate to the sins which have occasioned them? When they are, no Christian man can doubt the answer, for the Divine Mercy is everlasting: when they are not—and how seldom they are—we need the call and discipline of a holy season to deepen seriousness and stir repentance. On other days there is much else in Christian doctrine and practice for us to think of: today, must not that gracious word be suffered to come home to us, *Who forgiveth all thy sin and healeth all thine infirmities?* "Pray then humbly to the Lord," writes Thomas à Kempis, "that He may give thee the spirit of compunction; and say with the prophet, Feed me, O Lord, with the bread of tears, and give me for drink tears in large measure."

THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

O LORD, who for our sake didst fast forty days and forty nights: Give us grace to use such abstinence that our flesh being subdued to the Spirit, we may ever obey Thy godly motions in righteousness and true holiness, to Thy honour and glory, who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.

Like boys at school Christian men should always be in training. But as we are what we are, times and seasons have their use, and here we ask specially for the spirit of self-discipline. We all need it. But "such abstinence"; not, that is, the same in every case, for we dare not impose on others even what we may have found of benefit to ourselves, but such as will result for each one in better obedience. The point always is, Does this little rule express or help towards, and so more steadily fix, the submission of the lower nature to the higher? If so, then the way is clearer for the impulses of the Spirit, who will surely use a life so disciplined for some higher service, and supply holier thoughts and loftier praises to a heart so made ready. But it means that desire is tamed and self dethroned, for where the Lord Christ comes He comes to reign, and can the willing and constant obedience which is His due be rendered to Him in a life that is lax?

THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

ALMIGHTY God, who seest that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves; Keep us both outwardly in our bodies, and inwardly in our souls; that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Are we indeed so helpless? The opening words fit in exactly for use in a hospital where men are suffering from wounds and shock: what of the world at large, the healthy, the vigorous? "Madame, if it is difficult, it is done: if it is impossible, it shall be done." So said her minister to a famous queen, and, in his line of things, Calonne was perhaps equal to his promise. But his line did not cover the whole of life. A storm, a pestilence, even a mistake in crossing the street, and where are we, even the strongest? The spiritual region is no less fraught with peril, and a man's thoughts may be the real trouble of his life, for, so often, "one wandering thought pollutes the day." But God knows our frailty, yet not (we may be sure) to leave us content with it or allow it to be made an excuse; His Spirit welcomed within, loved and obeyed, will be our defence; and His angels, in answer to our prayers, will shield our bodies from many an unrealised harm.

THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

We beseech Thee, Almighty God, look upon the hearty desires of Thy humble servants, and stretch forth the right hand of Thy Majesty, to be our defence against all our enemies; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Our desires are important, for they are an index to character and tend to dominate life. Many of them will not bear inspection. But imagine them, as they need to be, thinned and purged, subdued and elevated: is defence against enemies then to be our main appeal? Old times, we repeat, have changed, and security of personal life is not so lacking, neither is prayer for it regarded as so essentially Christian. We want, not safety first, but to be better men, truer thinkers, and more efficient workers, in Christ's cause. Yet often still a man has an enemy—himself. Like the poet he feels "the weight of chance desires." His invincible self-regard and secret ambitions spoil what might be his best work. Envy, ill-will, satisfaction over his own little triumph, pleasure in his neighbour's little defeat, are real dangers to his soul. From all such may the good Lord deliver him, and help the true man within him to rise and speak—"Thee I now would serve more strictly if I may." So, by God's grace, will he "keep his heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

GRANT, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we, who for our evil deeds do worthily deserve to be punished, by the comfort of Thy grace may mercifully be relieved; through our Lord and Saviour, Jesu Christ. Amen.

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Moral Governor of the Universe." So meditated the grave Bishop Butler at the close of his days—a contrast to the modern man, who, we are told, and indeed can often see for ourselves, is not worrying about his sins. But the majesty of God, the severity of Jesus Christ, even the facts of life—how can we be blind to all these? Is it not true that the way of transgressors is hard? Do we not each one need to pray, God be merciful to me *the* sinner? We knew what we were doing, and we did it, and now, can we either deny the responsibility or stay the consequences? Yet let the Gospel be heard. There is a gospel. It speaks of grace. It has its comfortable words. It is one thing to go to church for, to escape from the round of work and sin and sorrow into an atmosphere of light and help and encouragement—comfort in a higher sense, ministering aid to soiled and broken spirits.

THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

We beseech Thee, Almighty God, mercifully to look upon Thy people; that by Thy great goodness they may be governed and preserved evermore, both in body and soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Save me—help me—preserve me: it is well if we so pray. But is it to be all? Why not also Guide me, rule and govern me? Can it be that we are ready to have the Lord Christ as our Saviour, but not to have Him as our Prince—to use Him, that is, but not to obey Him? It cannot be. "Our wills are ours to make them Thine." For so do we escape the imputation that our doctrine is an easy-going doctrine, which indeed it is not. It demands much that hardly one among us is eager or even willing to give—complete inward surrender, loyalty, service. "Governed and preserved," and here government comes first: where it is dutifully accepted, there the other will also be. But as Canon Green's friend, the local preacher of Flat Iron Market, put it: "God is the best Master in the world, but He will be Master. If He comes into your heart where He wants to come, He must come to rule." Even so come, Lord Jesus.

THE SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE EASTER

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, who, of Thy tender love towards mankind, hast sent Thy Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, to take upon Him our flesh, and to suffer death upon the cross, that all mankind should follow the example of His great humility: Mercifully grant that we may both follow the example of His patience, and also be made partakers of His resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

"God so loved that He gave." This is the truth, sometimes ignored, that lies behind both Incarnation and Atonement. But in this collect the emphasis is laid not so much on these as on the humility and patience of the Divine Son, and the appeal they make, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Jesus Christ." He is our own example, and only so far as we seek to follow it are we able to see it clearly as such, or, it may be, to enter into the wonder and meaning of those high matters of faith from which it cannot really be parted. But there was a "joy set before Him" which helped Him—what a light it throws upon the reality of His "flesh"! We will not forget this as we meditate upon His sufferings, nor will we reject the hope that in it we too may share, if only we try to be His disciples indeed. Yea, "carry the cross willingly and it will carry thee, and bring thee to thy wished-for end."

GOOD FRIDAY

ALMIGHTY God, we beseech Thee graciously to behold this Thy family, for which our Lord Jesus Christ was contented to be betrayed, and given up into the hands of wicked men, and to suffer death upon the cross, who now liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of the Church is governed and sanctified; Receive our supplications and prayers, which we offer before Thee for all estates of men in Thy holy Church, that every member of the same, in his vocation and ministry, may truly and godly serve Thee; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

O MERCIFUL God, who hast made all men, and hatest nothing that Thou hast made, nor wouldest the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live; Have mercy upon all Jews, Turks, Infidels, and Hereticks, and take from them all ignorance, hardness of heart, and contempt of Thy Word; and so fetch them home, blessed Lord, to Thy flock, that they may be saved among the remnant of the true Israelites, and be made one fold under one shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

"This Thy family"—His already by creation, yet for it the Lord Jesus was "contented to be betrayed." For it—on its behalf: to offer to God the sacrifice of a perfect filial obedience, so that we can plead,

> Look, Father, look on His anointed Face,
> And only look on us as found in Him.

But "in Him" takes us further and deeper. It points towards that true and godly service to which the second Collect refers, and even makes it possible, for it means a spirit of loyalty and sonship diffused throughout "the whole body." Thus, as His brethren and partakers of His Spirit, do men realise their vocation, and offer a ministry in His Name. Nay, His own ceases not: "I," He said, "if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself," and there is a hint of agelong activity in the words. But *all* men? Yea, even so, if come they will. He died not for His own nation only, but for the whole family, "that He might gather together into one the children of God that are scattered abroad." So is His cross to be the centre of the world. Hearing of it aright and under the magnetism of His appeal, must they not, the ignorant, the hard, the contemptuous, rise up at last and say, "We will go home"?

LIBRARY

EASTER DAY

ALMIGHTY God, who through Thine only-begotten Son Jesus Christ hast overcome death, and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life; We humbly beseech Thee, that as by Thy special grace preventing us Thou dost put into our minds good desires, so by Thy continual help we may bring the same to good effect; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Not an entirely triumphant collect, but a very practical one. The invocation strikes the jubilant chord, and then we are back in the thick of things. We let ourselves go in the hymns—"This is the day that the Lord hath made; we will be glad and rejoice in it." But life and its work are upon us immediately: happy if we take the assurance home with us that God is the author of good life here as of better life beyond the gate. His grace "prevents" us, starts first, as it were, and suggests "good desires," right instincts, a feeling for the ideal, a hope of betterment; it also co-operates with our own willingness, and that in the quiet, steady, onward push from day to day. "Good desires" and "good effect"—there is sometimes a long, long way between them. Yet each Easter, each Sunday, brings us the promise that He is on our side whom nothing can defeat, no prison doors defy, and whose purpose for His children in Christ is life, more life, life everlasting.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

ALMIGHTY Father, who hast given Thine only Son to die for our sins and to rise again for our justification; Grant us so to put away the leaven of malice and wickedness, that we may alway serve Thee in pureness of living and truth; through the merits of the same Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Malice and wickedness, transparency and truth: is there here, in both pairs, a reference to our two-fold duty, towards God and towards man, to the inner life of thought and motive and to the outer of word and deed? There may be, though not necessarily so. Yet in all these there is that which needs to be searched for and cleansed—lack of sincerity towards God, lack of honesty towards our brother. Leaven in the Bible is usually a symbol of evil, subtle and secret in its movement, penetrating in its spread and influence. Can it be put away? Is there even sufficient motive for the attempt? The death for our sins gives the latter, and the love that was capable of it "constraineth us": the Risen Life provides the answer to the former, for in this there was victory, and not for Himself alone, but for all those who by faith and self-surrender join themselves to Him, to learn its reality and power. Then justification, not legal only, but moral, worked out in purer lives and more faithful service. May they be ours!

THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

ALMIGHTY God, who hast given Thine only Son to be unto us both a sacrifice for sin, and also an ensample of godly life; Give us grace that we may always most thankfully receive that His inestimable benefit, and also daily endeavour ourselves to follow the blessed steps of His most holy life; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

"His life was too holy for our times and day, His example too high, its setting too remote, His steps too painful for our treading." Shall we then go on to add that His sacrifice for sin is also too unreal for our acceptance? Stay, there is a voice within us that seems to say, There was something to be done for you which in the light of the Divine holiness needed to be done, but which you could never have done for yourself. This He has done, for either the death of Christ was the atonement for human sin, or else (wrote Dr. Dale) it fills me with terror and despair. He made it by self-surrender, by love, by a complete and perfect obedience. We cannot do just the same things that He did—such is not God's will and commandment: we cannot (like the king's page) plant our feet exactly in the Master's steps. But we can exhibit the temper of His life, and seek to copy His atoning attitude. As a man does so, or tries to do so and fails, may not the need of that same sacrifice come home to him more nearly, its benefit rise in value, the steps, the blessed steps, become more obligatory and inevitable, whatever their pain?

THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

ALMIGHTY God, who shewest to them that be in error the light of Thy truth, to the intent that they may return into the way of righteousness; Grant unto all them that are admitted into the fellowship of Christ's Religion, that they may eschew those things that are contrary to their profession, and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same; through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Think of a handful of Christians living in the midst of a heathen population, and seeking to commend their faith by a changed walk and honest conversation, while, yonder, men are watching them to detect flaws, by which to excuse their own refusal and unbelief, and what point there is in this prayer! It is your life that counts, reiterates one teacher; Christians are the only Bible that the world will read, says another; what you are speaks so loud, declares a third, that I cannot hear what you say. There are higher reasons for doing so, but with men's eyes upon us we do need to walk circumspectly. The things we actually are to avoid may not always be easy to label: hence the need of an enlightened and sensitive conscience. But we are not Christians for nothing, and there are places and pleasures which are decidedly "contrary to our profession." Not that a man need always be saying to himself, "Thou shalt not"—there are so many good things to do and to follow: indeed, his life may be so rich and full that baser things will be crowded out. Follow, then, after righteousness: be doing good: such activity is of itself a safeguard.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

O ALMIGHTY God, who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men; Grant unto Thy people, that they may love the thing which Thou commandest, and desire that which Thou dost promise; that so, among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The man who wrote this surely possessed the secret. His heart seems anchored on the eternal verities, and neither winds of passion nor waves of change can disturb its peace. There are such men, and how we envy them, we whose spirits are restless, and whose minds, unstayed on Him who is the same yesterday, today, and for ever, are fretted by every gust of circumstance and of fortune! But an avenue towards rest is here suggested—namely, that we love what God bids, that we love it, not merely acquiesce in it or submit to it, but welcome it as something that is fair and beautiful in itself, as well as meant for our good. So His commandments may check our unruly wants and wishes—an element in our nature which, after all, when it is pampered, leads only to grumbling and discontent. But there are objects of desire, ordained by Him, which neither breed ill-will nor perish in the using, but may become ever more and more our own without robbing another—love and peace and joy, a goodness laid up and inviolable. As for the rest, riches and comfort and suchlike, are they in the bond?

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

O LORD, from whom all good things do come; Grant to us Thy humble servants, that by Thy holy inspiration we may think those things that be good, and by Thy merciful guiding may perform the same; through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

We live by ideals. Often they are poor and stunted, concerned only with perishable things, unsatisfying (one would think) to creatures endowed with mind and reason. On the other hand, they may be noble or even sublime, lifting us to new endeavour, and making the path before us always bright. Whence come they? May we not say that they are part of our make-up, tender plants set in the soil of our nature, in danger of neglect and death, yet, if tended, capable of blossom and fruit? Then are they of God, for it is He that hath made us, and His spirit breathes upon us still. But the thoughts and impulses that move us need to be "performed," else they may leave us: and they need to be "performed" wisely, for the highest ideals may be pursued in blind and erring fashion—truth, for instance, at all costs and no love, courage, and no tenderness. Hence the call for guidance. It is ours already in the Mind of Christ, that Best of all things; yet is it easy to be sure that today and in this particular we are expressing that ideal?

ASCENSION DAY

GRANT, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that like as we do believe Thy only-begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ to have ascended into the heavens; so we may also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with Him continually dwell, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.

"Heaven our home"—yes, and in a most true sense, even here and now, if that be our longing and our prayer, for it means to be "with Him." When He was on earth He trained His friends, step by step, to do without His visible Presence, till at last, as on this day, It was parted from their sight. Yet He also said, *I am with you alway*, and in reliance upon that great word they went forth to their tasks. "Master," two of them had once asked Him, "where dwellest Thou?" "Come," He said, "and ye shall see." Disciple of today, where dwellest *thou*? In whose company art thou, day by day? On what do thy hopes and imaginations play continually? When leisure is thine, whither run thy thoughts? . . . Cease awhile from the world, and in heart and mind follow thy ascended Lord, and bethink thee of the things that belong unto thy peace. Begin now to make heaven thy home: only so can it be truly thine hereafter.

SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION DAY

O God the King of glory, who hast exalted Thine only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph unto Thy kingdom in heaven; We beseech Thee, leave us not comfortless; but send us Thine Holy Ghost to comfort us, and exalt us unto the same place whither our Saviour Christ is gone before, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.

Comfortless, orphans, lonely—we think of the disciples in the interval before Pentecost: is there a parallel here and now? Well, where exactly do we live? We seem to do so in such and such a house, to be absorbed in this pursuit or in that, to find recreation in our favourite game or even in change of work. But is this all? We may know all this about a man without knowing *him*, and why? His life is "hid with Christ in God." If we are His, heaven lies about us. It is not the remote but the unseen. Thither the Lord Jesus has gone before us, for us, and through His spirit we may already live "in heavenly places." Yet, as was said of a saint whose home was in heaven, we all for awhile have lodgings here on earth where trials are many, and "to comfort us," whether it mean to strengthen or to console or both, is a touching and acceptable word. How many come to church, a special sphere of the Spirit's activities, some to escape awhile from loneliness and sorrow, others to be encouraged to face the daily round in the temper of the heavenly citizenship!

WHIT SUNDAY

GOD, who as at this time didst teach the hearts of Thy faithful people, by sending to them the light of Thy Holy Spirit; Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things, and evermore to rejoice in His holy comfort; through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour, who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

"A right judgment in all things," the spirit of wisdom, not (at its best) a common gift, not either perhaps so highly esteemed as it should be, for democratic ideas tend to make us think one man's judgment as good as another's. Yet a really wise man is a great asset, to family, Church, and State. He sees things in their due proportion. In doctrine he does not push one element till another is obscured, for he is aware that we all of us know only in part. In counsel he does not think only of today, for the Church, he remembers, will be here when we are all gone. In charity he goes all the way. Can these qualities be in wider commonalty spread? That is our prayer. The Spirit on Pentecost was shed abroad. All are, or may be, within the range of His operations. We are not all called to the ministry of the Word, or of teaching or of healing, but we all have our Christian service to render as well as our own lives to manage, and may not a right judgment save us from mistakes which not only lead to much private unhappiness, but actually often hinder the cause of God?

TRINITY SUNDAY

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, who hast given unto us Thy servants grace by the confession of a true faith to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of the Divine Majesty to worship the Unity; We beseech Thee, that Thou wouldst keep us steadfast in this faith, and evermore defend us from all adversities, who livest and reignest, one God, world without end. Amen.

We speak of the Holy Trinity not because our words can ever be adequate, but lest our silence should be misinterpreted—so wrote St. Augustine. Our proper attitude is to acknowledge a glory which we may never fully explore, to bow our heads and worship rather than to seek explanations which may after all be "more plain than true." Even the humblest form of life is mysterious: what can we say of the Highest? If speak we must, we repeat what the Incarnate Lord has said in the pages of St. John—"All things whatsoever the Father hath are mine." Is it then surprising that He is Himself the subject of the Spirit's work and ministry? For us His revelation is safeguarded by the creeds, yet we do not so much believe in them as believe on Him. Be clear on this and then steadfast. He "came down from heaven" to declare God's Being, and at His bidding we baptise men into the threefold Name. Yes, those final words of St. Matthew's Gospel we believe to be His own, and He Himself wonderful, majestic, mysterious.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

O God, the strength of all them that put their trust in Thee, mercifully accept our prayers; and because through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without Thee, grant us the help of Thy grace, that in keeping of Thy commandments we may please Thee, both in will and deed; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

How great sometimes, through the weakness of our mortal nature, is the gulf between will and deed! How hard is that keeping of the commandments, which beyond faith and prayer is the acid test of loyalty! I have known youths of some promise, affectionate, with some feeling for nobility of life, ready to shed tears over sentimental hymns, yet weak as water in the face of temptation and desperately unwilling to work. So in heathen lands the Creed is learnt, the Lord's Prayer is said; the stumbling-block is the Commandments. As Christian men we do not limit these to the Ten, certainly not in range and spirit. Yet what a different world it would be were only these kept! Will they be if the motive of love towards God be absent? We may doubt it. "That we may please Thee," not as a servant does his master, but as a son his father—this thought makes the difference: it gives "a Divine casting-vote in every balance of temptation."

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

O LORD, who never failest to help and govern them whom Thou dost bring up in Thy steadfast fear and love; Keep us, we beseech Thee, under the protection of Thy good providence, and make us to have a perpetual fear and love of Thy holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Fear and love, both, and twice over in the same prayer: dare we omit either? Certainly not love, but what about fear? The word needs careful use, for in a sense the message of the Gospel is just this, Fear not. It was heard at the holy Birth and at the glorious Resurrection. It was repeated by the Voice heard in Patmos. Let a man welcome it and whence it comes, and none shall make him afraid. Yet there is a fear which must ever be ours. "Remember," it was once said to a young schoolmaster, unduly anxious to win the affection of his pupils, "they will not give you their love unless you require their fear." There is truth in this. But think of our Maker and His holy Name, and can we escape from this same duty and obligation? Not that our fear will be slavish, but it must be grave and reverent. "Perfect love" no doubt "casteth out fear," but that is not ours yet.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

O LORD, we beseech Thee mercifully to hear us; and grant that we, to whom Thou hast given an hearty desire to pray, may by Thy mighty aid be defended and comforted in all dangers and adversities; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

"Do not forget," said the old clergyman, "that people come to church to be comforted." That need not mean simply to receive consolation amidst life's sorrows, though there it is the Christian who has the pull, but to be cheered on their way, and equipped to face duty or, it may be, adversity tomorrow. Yet a congregation always has within it men and women with secret trials, for the older men grow in life, it has been wisely said, the more work becomes their real play and suffering their real work. How many saints, exclaims William Law, hath adversity sent to heaven! But here is a man who has to go on living, and "Courage, brother" is the word that he needs. May we offer it him? Yes, the faith of the Gospel leaves us in no doubt. For all the tragedy in it the New Testament is a book of good cheer. Its central Figure is "a man of sorrows," but there is in Him a glorious courage which enables Him to "set His face towards Jerusalem." And was not prayer its secret?

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINIT

O God, the protector of all that trust in
without whom nothing is strong, nothing
holy; Increase and multiply upon us Thy me
that, Thou being our ruler and guide, we
so pass through things temporal, that we fi
lose not the things eternal; Grant this, O heav
Father, for Jesus Christ's sake our Lord. Ame

A succession here of instructive pairs and trasts. "Ruler and Guide," and not the one ithout the other, for to have the blessing of His guidance we must surely submit to His rule. Things temporal" and "things eternal"; and day in the midst of the former we ask to keep hold, if only a struggling, fluctuating hold, of ose others, and pray that we finally lose them So again "strong" and "holy," a pair n apparently separate in human character, et not always or necessarily so. Lastly, "in-ease and multiply." No real contrast perhaps but urgency of prayer, needed oftenest in niddle life when the pressure of the world is greatest, and things temporal absorb all our ights and energies. Yes, when "the world s too much with us," and "getting and spending e lay waste our powers," when ambition is keen, and above all, when success is ours, God ncrease and multiply His mercy upon us!

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

GRANT, O LORD, we beseech Thee, that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by Thy governance, that Thy Church may joyfully serve Thee in all godly quietness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

"The world goes its own wild way and God does not care." Has it not been said of late by men, and not in their haste but at their leisure? Amidst the horrors of war it needs calm thinking to see that such upheavals are not to be laid to His charge, but are only the result, on a large scale, of human sin. But this comes within the Church's province, and what the world needs above all is a Church that is sternly loyal to the Master's teaching about covetousness, and truly and tolerantly Catholic. Such a Church will have its effect upon the world's course, and, in turn, enjoy the greater tranquillity. But, the Church apart, does God indeed govern? To say so is an act of faith. But we make it every time we pray for the King, and, what is more, whenever we declare with St. Paul that to them that love God all things work together for good. Can we go on without some such assurance as that? Is joyful, or indeed any, service otherwise possible?

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

O God, who hast prepared for them that love Thee such good things as pass man's understanding; Pour into our hearts such love towards Thee, that we, loving Thee above all things, may obtain Thy promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Good things prepared—*goodness laid up* is the psalmist's phrase: and why not, if the world we see be itself an index and guide? For it was here long before man, the destined heir, arrived, and if God's provision be rich and generous for this stage of our life, why not for the next? Little, indeed, of the wealth prepared was evident to our primitive ancestor, yet it was there, as is much still, waiting for the touch of genius to undo the magic door: may not the same be true of the hereafter? True, here and now, it is to the brave and adventurous, the untiring in the pursuit of new knowledge and power, that the reward is given, and through them to their fellows, while *there* it is "for them that fear Thee, for them that trust in Thee": yet even so the venture of faith is demanded, and the loyalty that falters not. Do we understand it as yet? No, no more than the primitive hunter could know the virtue hidden in the foxglove. But it was there. So the good things are prepared for us: wait a while, and you may enjoy them.

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

LORD of all power and might, who art the author and giver of all good things; Graft in our hearts the love of Thy Name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness, and of Thy great mercy keep us in the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

What is true religion in the language of this collect? It is the love of the Divine Name, of a Person therefore, who is mighty indeed but also beneficent, for "the devil turned omnipotent would not be God." A tiny bud it is, set as it were on the stock of our human nature, for "Love Thou gavest me with Thyself to love," yet needing to be fed and nourished that so it may grow with us and influence the whole life. But essentially it is *love*. So ran the commandment of old time, "Thou shalt *love* the Lord thy God," and the last question of the Incarnate Lord to His disciple is "*Lovest* thou Me?" The condemnation of the Church at Ephesus is "Thou hast left thy first love." Was it once ours but now dying down? Then, O heavenly Husbandman, tend it and nourish it, cut away from about it all that thwarts or starves it, if haply it may shoot and live afresh. And if ours it never were, graft it in our hearts, we beseech Thee, and then visit it with Thy bounty, day by day, even unto the end!

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

O God, whose never-failing providence ordereth all things both in heaven and earth; We humbly beseech Thee to put away from us all hurtful things, and to give us those things which be profitable for us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hurtful things, like sin and excess, things profitable like mercy and peace—so far all is clear: the problem of the Christian life, however, is oftener found in things neutral which become hurtful or profitable as we use them well or ill. Success is not always the one, nor is failure the other. Things like money, fame, leisure, may, both in pursuit and in possession, be very doubtful blessings, if they are put first in a life where they ought to be at the most no higher than second. Hence the appeal to the ordering of the Divine Wisdom. It does not mean that we are to escape difficult decisions, or pain, or daily toil, for these may serve to refine us or at least to keep us out of mischief: but it does mean deliverance from the evil that wealth brings to one, success to another, failure to a third. "The blessing of the Lord it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow therewith." Yes, take or lose at His hands, and all will be well.

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

GRANT to us, Lord, we beseech Thee, the spirit to think and do always such things as be rightful; that we, who cannot do any thing that is good without Thee, may by Thee be enabled to live according to Thy will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Enabled, not compelled, for we may always say "No" at the critical moment. In the language of the Indian philosopher, the Divine Power does not carry the soul along as the cat does her kitten: there is a truer simile in the action of the young monkey which clings to its mother. That is, we must ourselves consent, ourselves think and act. Note both, especially the right thinking. Often a man has gone astray in practical matters because, as we say, he had "an idea in his head," a wrong and misleading one. May it not sometimes be the same in a higher region? It does not matter what a man believes—so we are told: it may be truer to say that what a man believes is to us the most interesting, and, to himself, the most important thing about him. For "what a man thinks, he becomes, and what a man thinks is chiefly a question of what he attends to." Grant to us, Lord, the spirit to attend to the things that belong to that will of Thine which is our peace!

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Let Thy merciful ears, O Lord, be open to the prayers of Thy humble servants; and that they may obtain their petitions make them to ask such things as shall please Thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Disciples could pray ignorant prayers: "ye know not what ye ask." Impelled by desire, prayer must yet be limited by promise, and in harmony with the will of God. "Such things as please" will be things fit for Him to give, good for us to receive. The prayer of St. Chrysostom is itself a commentary. First, there is the appeal to the Divine Wisdom: "Fulfil, O Lord, the desires and petitions of Thy servants as may be most expedient for them," for to have our desire, with leanness sent into our souls, would be far from expedient. Then two things bound to be good: "in this world knowledge of Thy truth, and in the world to come, life everlasting." For these we may pray always: do we always want to? The former may not seem so great a blessing, and of the latter it has been said that if our hunger for it be not at bottom a hunger for God, we were better without it. Is it that? Is knowledge of heavenly truth our main desire today? If not, then teach us, O Lord, and make us to ask for such things as these!

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

O God, who declarest Thy almighty power most chiefly in shewing mercy and pity; Mercifully grant unto us such a measure of Thy grace, that we, running the way of Thy commandments, may obtain Thy gracious promises and be made partakers of Thy heavenly treasure; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

"Man never is but always to be blest," and "if in this life only we have hoped in Christ we are of all men most pitiable." The verse has been declared to be unworthy of St. Paul, who here, we are told, is not at his usual level, inasmuch as virtue is its own reward. But is it, one wonders, really selfish to long to be rid of the sins that do so easily beset us, to want to have more light, and to know even as also we have been known? If so, then many of the best men on earth are open to the charge: certainly not a few whose lot is hard are bearing it, only because they have the promise of a heavenly treasure to fortify their hearts. It is not gold they expect, not meat and drink, but good things which baser men do not want and would not thank God for. But to regard every good act as an investment is what no real disciple ever does. Heaven, like all else, is a gift, conditioned by obedience to God's Will, which there is done constantly, willingly, perfectly: who that knows his own heart can ever even be hopeful of such service, here or there, if grace be denied?

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, who art always more ready to hear than we to pray, and art wont to give more than either we desire, or deserve; Pour down upon us the abundance of Thy mercy; forgiving us those things whereof our conscience is afraid, and giving us those good things which we are not worthy to ask, but through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

Things which we are not worthy to ask, which we do not deserve—yes, they are many. But our desires are different, and must, we think, often exceed the promises. No, these are set here over against the poverty of our souls and the meagreness of their wants. Not here the lawlessness of desire that is rebuked, but its inadequacy. We are content with husks when we might have angels' food. Our felt wants may be the starting-point of our prayers, but there is more in Him than can supply these, and there are deeper wants in our own nature. "The plenteousness of Thy house"—our greatest task may be to learn how to draw upon it. Too often we are like the boy of whom his master said, "He is a little vessel and he is full," and, alas, like Ephraim in the Old Testament and Laodicea in the New, with the wrong things. Oh for the abundance of Thy mercy, and the riches of Thy grace!

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

ALMIGHTY and merciful God, of whose only gift it cometh that Thy faithful people do unto Thee true and laudable service: Grant, we beseech Thee, that we may so faithfully serve Thee in this life, that we fail not finally to attain Thy heavenly promises; through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

"I have experienced most of the discipline that life has to give," said a good man once, "but there is one thing more that I must face, and that is failure." It came, and in failing he lost his life. But so was he faithful unto death and passed to his reward. Dare we contemplate a failure that is final? We should, with fear and self-scrutiny, for anything may happen to the best of us, and even the saints will cry, "O that we fall not from Thy grace, Nor cast away our crown!" The end—how significant it can be! A disciple sat down to see it, the Master loved His friends unto it, let a man endure to it and life is his. But thanks be to God, if faithfulness be thus the quality of all true and laudable service, it is also His own attribute, for He "cannot deny Himself" or cease to be our Saviour. Say then with decision, "I will keep Thy statutes": yet, because the flesh is weak, and who knows what may befall, add that humble petition, "O forsake me not utterly."

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, give unto us the increase of faith, hope, and charity; and that we may obtain that which Thou dost promise, make us to love that which Thou dost command; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

To submit to it, to do it grudgingly and of necessity—yes, but to *love* it is a different matter. Hence the need of increase, in our faith that God Himself is love and His commandments therefore meant only for our good: in our hope that as life goes on He will let us see more of His truth and assure us that all is well: in that charity which never faileth, but is the very air and atmosphere of heaven itself. We increase in a thing when we give attention to it, when we work at it, above all when we pray about it: yet, this last, always on the condition that our hearts are right before Him, and we seek to rule ourselves according to His word. Is it hard work? Sometimes: and yet "Thy testimonies are my delight, my songs, the very joy of my heart." If a man could say so who had only the light of ancient days to guide him, how much more we who have heard a new commandment from the lips of Love Incarnate?

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

KEEP, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy Church with Thy perpetual mercy; and, because the frailty of man without Thee cannot but fall, keep us ever by Thy help from all things hurtful, and lead us to all things profitable to our salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

We frail and sinful men were saved once when Christ died for us; we are being saved now by the perpetual mercy; we shall be saved eternally, we trust, in that day. Meanwhile we have our life to live here, amidst cares and pleasures and sorrows and work. Are all such things necessarily hurtful? No, they are God's appointment, but are nevertheless continually the subject of choice, and of any choice who can tell the issue? Much depends too on how they are faced. Is it with a prayer for restraint, for safety? Then we shall be "kept." But we need leading also, and guidance into things that are to be profitable for us by building us up in the faith, by fostering in us the sense of courage and hope and joy, by ministering to us such busy-ness of mind and body as shall tend to maintain the soul's health. The world is too much with us all, and the love of it may, from its very painlessness, be a fatal sin.

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

O Lord, we beseech Thee, let Thy continual pity cleanse and defend Thy Church; and, because it cannot continue in safety without Thy succour, preserve it evermore by Thy help and goodness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

To belong to no Church is perilous, it has been said, and here is a prayer for the Church in its widest sense, the blessed company of all faithful people. Usually the words are *we* and *us*, as the Lord's Prayer has them: now, more definitely, the Christian Society. Critics will say that it badly needs all that we pray for—purification, defence, government: God grant them all! But continue it will, we are certain, if only for the world's sake, whether persecution or patronage be its lot. "Sire," said the scholar to the king, "it belongs in truth to the Church of God in the name of which I speak to receive blows and not to give them; but it will please your majesty to remember that it is an anvil that has worn out many hammers." Yet it must not boast but pray. The history of its Jewish forerunner may well be a perpetual warning.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

LORD, we pray Thee that Thy grace may always prevent and follow us, and make us continually to be given to all good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

What is grace? The power, shall we say, whereby God works on the wills of His reasonable creatures. But it is personal rather than material. "There is no such *thing* as grace. The only reality is a gracious God." But however conceived, it means refinement of ideals, the reinforcement of will, and an enhanced quality of service. It means faithfulness too: "continually given to all good works." Men whose lives are lived without religious reference have their virtues, but not all the virtues, nor what they have do they possess deeply or securely. So Christian disciples may be strong in charity but a little indifferent to truth, or vice-versa: they may lack persistence, or even break down altogether. And, short of this, how often it is true, "One thing thou lackest!"

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

LORD, we beseech Thee, grant Thy people grace to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and with pure hearts and minds to follow Thee the only God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

"The world, the flesh, and the devil." These ancient foes and not scientific discoveries or, usually, new systems of thought, are the real enemies of the Church, and often what men need is not, as they think, more evidence but more grit. To the best man temptation is sure to come: "My son, if thou comest to serve the Lord prepare thy soul for temptation. But woe unto the faint heart, for it believeth not: therefore shall it not be defended." It is decision that is necessary, that act of will which, if it be to follow Christ, does more for a man than anything else on earth. Live in earnest, cried Frederick Robertson, and you will soon know the answer to "What is truth?" Grace to do so is ours for the asking, but it needs the active and consenting will. Then all things are possible.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

O God, forasmuch as without Thee we are not able to please Thee; Mercifully grant, that Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Here in a nutshell, not in credal form but in prayer's more winning language, is the Christian faith. The frailty of man, the sense of dependence and (what is more) of sin, the spirit which cries with St. Francis, O God, what art Thou and what am I? Yet an annihilation of distance in the revelation of the Spirit, vouchsafed to loving and obedient hearts in guidance given and (welcome and necessary touch of severity) rule imposed. We need it, perhaps, oftenest in the apparently trivial turns of life, the little decisions which come to mean so much. Therefore, "in all things." But "through Jesus Christ," in whom we believe that the Spirit, His Spirit, is ours. A busy man can hardly select a more fruitful prayer for daily use. He will have what the Christian religion has been declared to mean—eternal life, in the midst of time, by the strength and under the eyes of God. Yes, use it.

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

O ALMIGHTY and most merciful God, of Thy bountiful goodness keep us, we beseech Thee, from all things that may hurt us; that we being ready both in body and soul, may cheerfully accomplish those things that Thou wouldest have done; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A morning prayer, and very apt both in deprecation and petition: how reckless to start the day without such! The things that may hurt us are usually faults, not of circumstance, but of self: these may really hurt us, those others may test—and help. It is a wrong though popular idea of God's bountiful goodness that it is there to make life comfortable for us: His purpose is, rather, our ready and cheerful obedience. Note the epithets. The horses at Branksome Tower "stood saddled in stable day and night," and a chance of service soon comes if our hearts are waiting: then, knowing it to be God's will, we embrace it cheerfully. "Serve God and be cheerful" was the old bishop's motto. "Cheerfulness was always breaking in," said old Edwards to Dr. Johnson. But then he was trying to lead the Christian life.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

GRANT, we beseech Thee, merciful Lord, to Thy faithful people pardon and peace, that they may be cleansed from all their sins, and serve Thee with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

"Take a holiday, or at least a long week-end: you are run down." Perhaps so, but often the underlying cause is not physical but spiritual, the discord of a divided heart. It yearns for peace, but it cries with St. Augustine, "Not yet, not yet." Peace without cleansing, however, is unreal. Pardon therefore first, an elementary thing, yet, such is human nature, needed repeatedly—repentance its condition, peace its result: both of them gifts to be asked for, both surely given in response to the cry of faith, let it only come from a soul prepared for the great surrender. Service follows, and that, God grant, without fear or mental anxiety. The quiet mind alone can concentrate on what is due and render a perfect service, nor is it lacking when the peace of God "garrisons" a heart that is set to obey. "In quietness," said the prophet, "shall be your strength."

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

LORD, we beseech Thee to keep Thy household the Church in continual godliness; that through Thy protection it may be free from all adversities, and devoutly given to serve Thee in good works, to the glory of Thy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

It is not easy to keep a whole family true to itself, or succeeding generations loyal to their fathers' faith. Like many another God's own household may be invaded by worldliness, its love may die down, unbelief render it almost apostate. Then adversity, and the long road back to devotion. Not that piety is sure of protection, or adversity always an ill: but were life altogether hard and unsafe, as it often was when the Collects were first written, we might fail in the good works for which other men should learn to glorify God. The wonder is that the Church of those days did so many: their source must always have been a high inward loyalty, given and sustained and perfected by grace. But we are likewise God's sons and daughters, and dare we disown our parentage, or dishonour that ancestral piety which, over and above any worldly goods, has always been our best inheritance?

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

O God, our refuge and strength, who art the author of all godliness; Be ready, we beseech Thee, to hear the devout prayers of Thy Church; and grant that those things which we ask faithfully we may obtain effectually; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Monica obtained effectually, though God denied her what she prayed for once—namely, her son's presence in Africa—in order that He might give her what she prayed for always—his conversion. So he himself puts it, to teach us that momentary wishes, short views, dictation of methods, are no part of true prayer, which means the willing adjustment of ourselves and our plans to the Infinite Wisdom, the bringing of ourselves into line, so that in us and through us the Power may work. Like their ideas of God, most men's prayers also need purification, and the Lord's Prayer is the model, alike in its arrangement (for there the things of God came first) and in the simplicity of its requests. God's readiness to hear such prayers is absolute, and to those who so pray He is indeed a refuge and strength. There is no doubt about it. The witness of the saints is beyond cavil—"How blest whose lives are faithful prayers!"

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

O Lord, we beseech Thee, absolve Thy people from their offences; that through Thy bountiful goodness we may all be delivered from the bands of those sins, which by our frailty we have committed: Grant this, O heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our blessed Lord and Saviour. Amen.

"Cleanse me from its guilt and *power*." This may be appalling. The bands of old sins are often apparently unbreakable. For the man is no longer even what he was: his mind is darkened, his will damaged, his imagination soiled. So the good Dr. Jekyll sits self-complacent in the sunshine enjoying evil memories, and straightway Mr. Hyde is there. But whether a legacy of the past or no, there is for us all the sin that doth so easily beset us, and that Christ is *Saviour*, and not simply Teacher or Saint, is the Church's permanent and pre-eminent message. So, then, first, absolution: is He not "for" us? Then liberty, offered to us through the power of His Spirit, yet also to be won. When, in Bunyan's allegory, Christian left the place of the Cross free of his burden he came upon three men fast asleep, with fetters on their heels, *Simple* and *Sloth* and *Presumption*. The names are significant.

> There was a bitterer wound He wore
> For souls He could not save.

SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE ADVENT

STIR up, we beseech Thee, O Lord, the wills of Thy faithful people; that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may of Thee be plenteously rewarded; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

"Thou hast written well of Me, Thomas: what reward dost thou ask?" "None other but Thyself, O Lord." Neither in industry nor in loftiness of hope are we all on the level of him who wrote the *Summa*. It may be that we have got beyond thinking of our faith as a system of rewards and punishments, and regard it rather as the Divine call to our human waywardness and need, and our own response thereto. Yet we do not reject the Collect. Plenteously rewarded—yes, if it be to serve the Master still and to see His face. This is more explicit than the saint's request, but in essence it is the same. Meanwhile service is our duty, and that we should bear fruit, much fruit, is itself a training in discipleship. We learn to write—by writing: we prepare for "the full-grown energies of heaven" by naturalising ourselves here and now to its employments. But it means effort. Yea, Lord, stir up our wills!

ALL SAINTS' DAY

O ALMIGHTY God, who hast knit together Thine elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of Thy Son Christ our Lord; Grant us grace so to follow Thy blessed Saints in all virtuous and godly living that we may come to those unspeakable joys, which Thou hast prepared for them that unfeignedly love Thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Unspeakable joys prepared for us, yet to be won through love unfeigned, and virtuous and godly living. There are those—mystics we usually call them—who in a measure have anticipated their enjoyment, scaling in the days of their pilgrimage heights of vision which we more matter-of-fact disciples cannot explore, and hearing words which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Well for us that we adhere to their fellowship, and follow their faith! "You ask me," a man has said before now, "you ask me for my evidences. I answer, My father's life. He was a witness to me of the truth and efficacy of the Gospel. He knew it and lived by it, and, what he was, I hope to become. It keeps me up and helps me along to think that some day I may be allowed to rejoin his company." Yes, to have known one saint well is not to have lived in vain.

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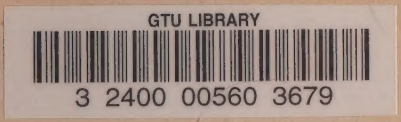

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